

NARRATIVE

A mural salvaged from a ship destined to be sunk as part of an effort to create an artificial reef.¹ Buildings constructed in 1936 at the Texas State Fairgrounds to celebrate 100 years of Texas independence whose Art Deco facades concealed large-scale deterioration.² A zoo saved from a repeat of a 1981 flood by a specially-constructed levee.³ A collection of state papers reclaimed after 161 years in private hands, during which time they were stored in a home, in a bank vault, and, at one time, in the trunk of a car.⁴ These and other stories illustrate the variety of collections care needs we face in Texas.

In response, the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) and its partners, the Texas Historical Commission, the Texas Association of Museums, the Texas Library Association, Amigos Library Services, and the Kilgarlin Center for Preservation of the Cultural Record at the University of Texas at Austin's School of Information, will conduct a multi-year effort to establish processes and develop resources needed to assess the collection care needs of institutions across the state. In the first two years of this effort, we propose to accomplish the following:

- Establishment of a Grant Oversight Committee with representation from the formal grant partners, in conjunction with an Advisory Committee with representatives from collecting institutions.
- Publication of a meta-analysis showing trends and needs identified in previous institutional assessments and statewide surveys.
- Integration of separate institutional databases maintained by the grant partners to form a single combined database of collecting institutions.
- Development of a collections inventory and needs assessment survey tool, validated through pilot testing and subsequent focus groups.
- Communication of statewide and regional collections care concerns through meetings held in various locations across the state.
- Consolidation of resources for preservation and conservation of various collections on a single website maintained by one of the grant partners.

An IMLS Connecting to Collections Statewide Planning Grant will assist us in our efforts to preserve the state's historical, natural, and cultural collections for future generations. Our ultimate vision for this effort is that all Texans will be knowledgeable about their multi-cultural heritage; that they will have universal access to the record of the past; and that they will value contemporary collections and preserve them for the future. In order to achieve this, the partners in this grant will work collaboratively to build a strong foundation of public and private support for collections care and preservation across the state.

¹ Elliott, Janet. (2007 October 8). "Restoration needed for salvaged 1940s mural." *The Houston Chronicle*. Available at <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/5198168.html>

² National Trust for Historic Preservation. (2007). "11 Most Endangered Places: Fair Park's Texas Centennial Buildings." Available at <http://www.nationaltrust.org/11Most/list.asp?i=79>

³ FEMA.gov. (2007). "Levee Provides Time For Animal Rescue." *Mitigation Best Practices Portfolio*. Available at <http://www.fema.gov/mitigationbp/bestPracticeDetail.do?mitssId=4506>

⁴ Texas State Library and Archives Commission. (2006 July 11). "Texas Legation Records come home to the Texas State Archives after 161 years." *The Open Record*. Available at <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/theopenrecord/archives/25>

Part 1. Need and Rationale

While not unique to Texas, the need for care of collections held by libraries, archives, museums, and other institutions is increased by the sheer size of Texas. According to the *Texas Almanac*, "Texas occupies about 7 percent of the total water and land area of the United States. Texas is as large as all of New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and North Carolina combined." It takes nearly 15 hours to drive from Brownsville in south Texas to Amarillo in the Panhandle, and nearly 14 hours to drive from El Paso in far west Texas to Beaumont, near Louisiana.

The number of collecting institutions in Texas is proportionate to the size of the state. Texas has more than 700 public, academic, and special libraries; over 600 museums of history, art, science, and natural history; and innumerable historical and genealogical societies, corporate and special archives, and other "cultural heritage institutions." It is home to three ALA-accredited library schools (including the top-rated program for archival studies according to the 2006 *U.S. News & World Report* survey); two graduate-level museum studies programs, a graduate program in historic preservation, and several undergraduate and graduate public history programs; the largest state library association and one of the largest state associations of museums in the country; and a significant presence in the regional society of archivists.

On September 14, 2007, the Texas State Library and Archives invited 25 representatives of institutions with collection care responsibilities and associations representing those institutions to a meeting to review previous statewide conservation and preservation efforts in light of the IMLS Connecting to Collections Initiative. Participants were asked also to consider the findings of the 2005 *Heritage Health Index Report* and the four strategies recommended by Heritage Preservation to assist with the preservation of collections held in the public trust:

- Institutions must give priority to providing safe conditions for the collections they hold in trust.
- Every collecting institution must develop an emergency plan to protect its collections and train staff to carry it out.
- Every institution must assign responsibility for caring for collections to members of its staff.
- Individuals at all levels of government and in the private sector must assume responsibility for providing the support that will allow these collections to survive.

The partners and stakeholders who attended this meeting agreed that Texas had made significant and repeated efforts to implement the first three recommendations. These efforts, however, were rarely sustainable because sufficient long-term support for them had not been secured.

In order to obtain support from individuals in government, the private sector, and the general public, the grant partners have agreed that we must develop a more comprehensive and cooperative approach to collections care. We can start by sharing resources among the largest institutions with statewide responsibility for collections in libraries, archives, museums, and government agencies in a collaborative planning process. We will follow this planning phase with a comprehensive statewide survey of collections as well as additional meetings, resource development, and a coordinated response to collections care. By combining data and planning for improved data gathering, we will build a strong base on which advocacy efforts and public relations campaigns can later be built.

Part 2. Planning Process

Texas has a long history of gathering information relating to institutions and collections across the state, and one of the strengths of our partnerships is that each of the partners brings valuable historical data to the planning process as well as experience in collaborative projects such as the State of Texas Alliance for Response Taskforce (START), the Texas Heritage Digitization Initiative, and various cooperative continuing education efforts.

In 1991, Amigos Library Services performed a Preservation Needs Assessment Survey for libraries and archives in its five-state service area. Of the 240 surveys returned, 127 were from Texas institutions. This survey is attached. Its results have been independently validated by the Kilgarlin Center for Preservation of the Cultural Record, previously the Preservation and Conservation Studies program at the School of Information, the University of Texas at Austin. Similarly, the Texas Historical Records Advisory Board has done three studies of Texas archives for the Texas State Library, in 1978, 1985, and 1995; the last of these, "Too Lightly Esteemed in the Past: Archival Enterprise, Records Management, and Preservation Administration in Texas," is also attached.

In 2004, the Texas Historical Commission hosted "Summerlee Revisited: A Community-Based Museum Summit" to explore ways in which the THC and the State of Texas could design services and programs to support the state's small history museums. In the final report on this Summit, attached, collections care and conservation was repeatedly mentioned as a top priority, and two of the top five listed priorities, "Development of a formal mentoring network" and "Staffing and training/professional development" had collections care implications. Additional studies by the Texas Association of Museums and the Texas Library Association came to similar conclusions.

In 2005, shortly after Hurricane Rita made landfall, TSLAC received a \$25,000 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission to assess the damage to historically valuable records in the counties affected by the hurricane. A direct mail survey sent to 150 governments and organizations in December 2005 revealed that while damage to historical records had been minimal, half of the respondents indicated that they did not have a Records Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Plan in place prior to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The summary report for this study is also attached.

The six partners in this project, the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, the Texas Historical Commission, Amigos Library Services, the Texas Association of Museums, the Texas Library Association, and the Kilgarlin Center for Preservation of the Cultural Record, will work collaboratively to combine these various sources of data, along with additional sources such as the Heritage Health Index data for Texas, into a single comprehensive meta-analysis that will give us a longitudinal view of collections care in Texas. Additionally, the partners will share information about member institutions in Texas to form a single database of libraries, archives, government agencies, and museums in the state. As many of the existing data sources also include geographic information, this will itself become a valuable tool for statewide disaster planning. The database will be put online using Texas State Library and Archives Commission resources and will be maintained collaboratively by the grant partners and other institutions following the period of this planning grant.

Each of the partners will have a seat on the Grant Oversight Committee. Additional grant management will be obtained through a ten-person Grant Advisory Committee. The Grant Oversight Committee and Grant Advisory Committee will work together to develop a collections inventory and needs assessment tool that will be pilot tested by Amigos Library Services during this grant. This tool will allow us to measure the number and types of collections in the state as well as the needs of the institutions that hold them with

respect to training, funding, and other resources. The tool will be modeled in part on surveys done in other states such as North Carolina.

The size, as well as the geographic and cultural diversity of Texas, however, makes it essential that any tool be pilot tested prior to large-scale development. We propose to perform a pilot test of the tool, using a sample with stratifications for institution size, region, and type, on approximately 10% of the institutions identified in our combined database, or roughly 200 institutions, making it equivalent in size, if not in scope, to comprehensive surveys in other states. Follow-up interviews and analysis of the pilot test itself will assist us in later large-scale implementation efforts. A truly comprehensive collections inventory and needs assessment, with the goal of receiving input from the majority of the roughly 2,000 institutions we expect to identify in our combined database, will necessarily require additional funding for large-scale implementation.

Amigos Library Services will be responsible for developing a website with collections care resources, assisted by an existing NEH Preservation and Access grant. The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, although not a formal partner in this grant, will also contribute resources relating to collections care as part of its IMLS National Leadership Grant to develop an Art Conservation Database. Interns from the Kilgarlin Center for Preservation of the Cultural Record will assist Amigos in identifying additional resources for the website and developing user-friendly tools to facilitate resource use and sharing of preservation and conservation knowledge and skills among institutions.

In addition to these results, we hope to see outcomes including a better understanding of the collections care issues facing Texas and clear direction for future work based on the meta-analysis of previous studies and the pilot collections inventory and needs assessment. Improved communication among collecting institutions, facilitated by statewide and regional meetings, will also be a valuable outcome. Pre-conferences at the Texas Library Association and Texas Association of Museums conferences, held in Houston and El Paso in 2009, will help us to determine regional needs. A final statewide meeting in Austin will assist attendees in developing strategies to continue our efforts to secure public and private support for collections care.

Part 3. Project Resources: Budget, Personnel, and Management

Personnel and Management

Management of the Connecting to Collections Statewide Planning Grant will be performed by the Grant Oversight Committee, composed of representatives from the project participants. Beverley Shirley, director of the Library Resource Sharing Division at the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, will serve as project administrator. Danielle Cuniff Plumer, coordinator of the Texas Heritage Digitization Initiative at TSLAC, and Laura Casey, state coordinator for museum services at the Texas Historical Commission, will serve as project co-directors. Additional Grant Oversight Committee members will include Gina Minks, manager of Imaging and Preservation Services at Amigos; Ellen Cunningham-Kruppa, director of the Kilgarlin Center for Preservation of the Cultural Record at the School of Information, the University of Texas at Austin; Sandy Sage, program associate at the Texas Association of Museums; and Gloria Meraz, director of communications for the Texas Library Association.

Additional grant management will be obtained through a ten-person Grant Advisory Committee, which will include representatives of libraries, archives, museums, and government agencies distributed across the various regions of the state. Each partner will nominate up to three individuals to this committee, and the final committee selection will be made through a consensus process.

Budget

The budget for this project can be divided into three sections. The first section is dedicated to the development of a collections inventory and needs assessment instrument and subsequent pilot testing of the tool. The second component of the budget is dedicated to regional and statewide meetings related to collections care. Grant funding will be used for speakers, meeting expenses, and travel stipends to these meetings so that representatives from smaller institutions, whose perspective might otherwise be lost, can attend.

The third budget component is administrative costs. Although not required under the terms of the grant, three of the strategic partners (Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Texas Historical Commission, and Amigos Library Services) have agreed to commit staff time and resources to the "Connecting to Collections" project, which will enable us to focus grant resources on the first two components.

Sustainability

The partners in this grant effort are committed to the long-term sustainability of this effort and to our vision that all Texans will be knowledgeable about their multi-cultural heritage; that they will have universal access to the record of the past; and that they will value contemporary collections and preserve them for the future. Past projects of this type in Texas have not been sustainable, often due to funding issues. For that reason, the partners in the current proposal will focus on the fourth of the recommendations in the *Heritage Health Index*:

- Individuals at all levels of government and in the private sector must assume responsibility for providing the support that will allow these collections to survive.

Adequate care of collections statewide requires a statewide approach to support and funding. Unlike states such as Kentucky, New York, and Missouri, Texas does not currently have a statewide collections preservation fund. In its 2005 Self-Evaluation Report submitted to the Sunset Advisory Commission, the Texas State Library and Archives Commissioners addressed this issue, and development of such a fund remains an agency priority.⁵

One model for such a fund is the Texas Preservation Trust Fund (TPTF), administered by the Texas Historical Commission. Created by the Texas Legislature in 1989, the TPTF is an interest-earning pool of public and private monies; the earned interest and designated gifts are distributed yearly as matching grants to public and private owners of eligible projects such as archaeological sites, public and commercial buildings, and other historic structures. In 2008-2009, the Texas Historical Commission will have slightly over \$1 million to award from the TPTF, or just over \$4,000 per county for each of Texas' 254 counties.

It is clear that additional public and private support is critically needed. We anticipate that our efforts in this Connecting to Collections Statewide Planning Grant will give institutions concerned with collections care the resources and information needed to justify public and private support for conservation and preservation of collections across the state. Our efforts cannot be otherwise sustained, and our collections will remain at risk.

⁵ TSLAC (2005). "Policy Issue Five: Preservation of Historical Government Records." Available at <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/agency/sunset/issue5.html>